



County Administrative Office
Governmental & Legislative Affairs

Josh Candelaria
Governmental & Legislative
Affairs Director

August 25, 2015

The Hannah-Beth Jackson
Chair, Senate Judiciary Committee
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: SB 168 (Gaines), as amended on August 24, 2015 – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Jackson:

The County of San Bernardino is pleased to support SB 168, legislation that would increase penalties for drone interference with firefighting activities and provide civil immunity for any emergency responder who damages a drone in the course of firefighting, air ambulance, or search-and-rescue operations.

As you may be aware, our County has been the scene of several major wildfires in the past month, including the Lake Fire, which burned 31,359 acres in the San Bernardino National Forest, and the North Fire, which burned 4,250 acres, shut down the critical Interstate 15 through Cajon Pass, and resulted in the destruction of seven homes, and dozens of vehicles. In each of those cases, as well as other recent fires, drones in the area forced tanker aircraft to be grounded during critical times of the firefighting efforts.

SB 168 would make it a misdemeanor to use or operate a drone at forest fire sites, punishable by a fine in an amount between \$200 and \$2,000 dollars. The bill would also provide that if a person knowingly, intentionally or recklessly violates the prohibition against flying a drone over a fire area, the violation would be punishable by imprisonment in a county jail for up to six months or by a fine of \$5,000 or both.

Presence of airborne drones endangers the life of the pilots, emergency responders and citizens on the ground, and can lead to loss of life, property and valuable habitat if aerial operations are unnecessarily suspended. SB 168 will discourage the reckless behavior of individuals that endanger the lives and property of our residents and emergency personnel.

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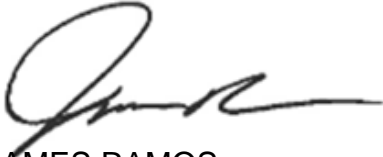
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For these reasons, the County of San Bernardino requests an “Aye” vote on SB 168. If you have any questions, please contact Josh Candelaria, Director of Governmental and Legislative Affairs at (909) 387-4821 or jcandelaria@sbcounty.gov.

Sincerely,



JAMES RAMOS
Board of Supervisors Chairman
Third District Supervisor
County of San Bernardino



Robert Lovingood
Board of Supervisors Vice Chairman
First District Supervisor
County of San Bernardino

c: Honorable Ted Gaines
Honorable Members and Consultants, Senate Judiciary Committee
County of San Bernardino Legislative Delegation